

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LAHORE 00780 281130Z

43

ACTION NEA-16

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-03 SS-20

USIA-15 EB-11 COME-00 AGR-20 TRSE-00 DRC-01 AID-20

/143 W

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R 281045Z MAY 74

FM AMCONSUL LAHORE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0024

INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMCONSUL PESHAWAR

UNCLAS LAHORE 0780

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAGR, PK

SUBJECT: BHUTTO REFUSES TO INCREASE WHEAT PRICE

1. DURING HIS MAY 25 PRESS CONFERENCE PRIOR TO DEPARTING LAHORE FOR ISLAMABAD, PRIME MINISTER BHUTTO SAID GOP HAD TAKEN CONSIDERED DECISION NOT RPT NOT TO INCREASE WHEAT PRICES. HE ADVISED SPECULATORS AND HOARDERS TO SHED THEIR HOPES FOR PRICE INCREASE, AND ALLOW THEIR STOCKS TO ENTER MARKET. HE HOPED PAKISTAN COULD ACHIEVE SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN WHEAT, AND ASSERTED THAT GOP WAS MAKING EVERY EFFORT TO STOP SMUGGLING AND TO MEET WHEAT PROCUREMENT TARGET.

2. BHUTTO CONCEDED THAT PRICES OF AGRICULTURAL INPUTS INCLUDING FERTILIZERS HAD GONE UP, AND THAT FARMERS SHOULD HAVE FAIR INCENTIVES TO INCREASE PRODUCTION. FROM THAT STANDPOINT, HE ADMITTED THERE WAS NO JUSTIFICATION FOR KEEPING WHEAT PRICES AT CURRENT LEVEL, WHICH HE DESCRIBED AS "LOWEST IN THE WORLD." HOWEVER, HE ARGUED THAT GOVERNMENT WAS CONCENTRATING ON GIVING FAIR DEAL TO FARMERS FOR COTTON THEY PRODUCED, AND SAID HE WAS CONCERNED THAT RISE

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PAGE 02 LAHORE 00780 281130Z

IN WHEAT PRICE WOULD BE HEAVY BURDEN ON PERSONS WITH FIXED

SALARIES AND LOW INCOME.

3. PRIME MINISTER'S ANNOUNCEMENT BROUGHT GRUMBLES FROM SEVERAL WHEAT GROWERS. HOWEVER, PUNJAB FOOD MINISTER DARISHAK ISSUED PRESS STATEMENT MAY 27, NOTING THAT GOVERNMENT OF THE PUNJAB HAD ALREADY RAISED PROCUREMENT PRICE OF WHEAT TO RS. 25.50 FOR CURRENT CROP, AND ANNOUNCING THAT GOVERNMENT HAD DECIDED TO PAY FULL PRICE TO GROWERS REGARDLESS OF QUALITY OF WHEAT. HE WARNED HOARDERS AND SPECULATORS WOULD BE CONSIDERED "WORST ENEMIES OF NATION" AND WOULD BE ACCORDED SEVERE PUNISHMENT IF CAUGHT.

GRIFFIN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: WHEAT, SMUGGLING, PRESS CONFERENCES, PRICES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 28 MAY 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974LAHORE00780
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740133-0297
From: LAHORE
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740514/aaaaamja.tel
Line Count: 73
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: boyleja
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 04 NOV 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <04 NOV 2002 by boyleja>; APPROVED <07 JAN 2003 by boyleja>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: BHUTTO REFUSES TO INCREASE WHEAT PRICE
TAGS: EAGR, PK, (BHUTTO, ALI)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005